FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

Volume XXI, Number 2, April 1970

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Our purpose: To promote the practice of prayer among all religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God, regardless of race, creed, or color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind.

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PRAYER

God grant that we may
realize it is in the big
things of life we are at one;
it is the little things that
create differences.
And may we strive to touch
and to know the great
common human heart of
us all and O Lord, God,
Let us not forget to be
kind.

Mary Stuart's Prayer
(Courtesy of Juliet Crist)

EDITORIAL

In the last issue of FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER, H. Richard Rasmusson ended his essay, "On Learning How To Pray," with this trinity of admonitions:

Pray unselfishly.
Pray receptively.
Pray affirmatively.

In a very curious way—and, quite possibly, in a way that Mr. Rasmusson would never have imagined—these adjurations form a truly provocative theme if but one more is added:

Pray for prayer.

Pray for prayer? Yes: PRAY FOR PRAYER. If this sounds facetious, it is not: It is a dead-serious—or perhaps, better said, *live*-serious—way of suggesting a re-examination of prayer, of looking at it from a little different perspective. (It should be made perfectly clear that I have borrowed Mr. Rasmusson's words and changed their context for the purposes of inquiry and speculation, of challenging the subject in the best interests, let us hope, of the subject.)

Surely, we, every reader of this publication, should know something about prayer. It is, after all, our whole purpose, our mission. But that may even be a part of the problem! Since most of us have had some kind of history, a tradition, of prayer, we tend to take it for granted. Thus, the *pray*-phrases come naturally to us. The words, as words, evoke warm responses, and it is quite easy to

soothe the emotions without engaging the mind. Or, and fairly common, too, the words are fear-dread-sin signals, and the prayer is a verbal mechanism to keep the psyche from floundering or to keep the *self,* somehow, within the boundaries of God's kingdom. How often are they rote reactions, embalmed rituals, dead ideas—which, as Bertrand Russell observed, "keep about as well as dead fish."

Pray unselfishly? Yes, yes, we *should.* Pray receptively? Why, of course. We are all receptive to the *notion.* Pray affirmatively? Certainly, you wouldn't want us to pray *negatively,* would you? We pray this way and that way, and virtues are conferred easily, anaclitically thereby—to make us trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, etc.

But does it work? Really? Could we demonstrate to a citizen of some other universe that we had sufficient evidence for its validity? Would he accept, in fact, mere repetitions of the "act" over hundreds of years as evidence? Can prayer be silent? With unbowed head and unbended knee? Can a string quartet be a prayer? Could not life itself be considered a form of prayer—maybe even the ultimate form of it? It is, indeed, a question composed of questions, and every reader could supply still another one.

Sometime around the age of four, I spent a couple of very frustrating weeks trying to prove a bit of Southern folk wisdom: "You can catch a bird if you put salt on his tail." It finally occurred to me—in, as they say, a flash—that if one were able to get that close to a bird, he did not *need* the salt. At first, I burned with a hard, gem-like resentment over this terrible "deception." It was only years later that I decided it was "true," and a bit of wisdom

after all. Moral: In the Kierkegaard fable, a man goes into a shop to buy a portion of the precious commodity advertised in the window—HAPPINESS FOR SALE. What he discovers is that *only* the sign is for sale. Or to put it another way, sometimes we must go in odd directions to traverse a straight line.

Pray for prayer? Yes. But not just for the sake of prayer. Rather, prayer as process, a process for expanding our awareness and experience of the human to the holy, during which all of us can make notations for the great record of our time and place.

* * * *

This column has been but a preface to the editorial which follows: TRANSFORMATION THROUGH PRAYER/*A Call for Volunteers*. Every reader *can* help in this Call. Your most thoughtful attention is requested as well as your participation. Your ideas, opinions, and comments are invited, and reports will be printed periodically. Perhaps we really can answer some of those questions. Or ask them more meaningfully.

— J. W.

You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give.

— Kahlil Gibran

TRANSFORMATION THROUGH PRAYER

— a call for volunteers

The multiplying pressures of modern life are causing sociologists, psychologists, and ministers to recommend ever more radical remedies for our ills, but the technique of prayer is seldom even mentioned as a means of transforming lives and solving the mounting problems of our age. Only too many people, it would seem, assume that the placement of things is more important than the condition of the soul. From this misapprehension much confusion results.

Is it possible to adduce evidence to show that more can be accomplished by transforming the inner life of the individual than by restructuring the environment? If this can be done, we shall have made a notable contribution. We shall have proved that man's greatest resources are within, not outside, him.

It is our considered belief that we have an opportunity to break new ground by exploring this possibility further. While it is true that much testimony has already been given concerning the efficacy of prayer, we believe that creative experiments should be conducted to demonstrate its broader use in changing the thought-climate of the entire nation, in healing divisions, invoking salutary energies, and in re-shaping the nation in a new image.

We should like to build foundations under this belief, but to do so we need your help.

To be specific, we should like to have at least fifty volunteers who are willing to conduct a spiritual experiment on themselves—an experiment that involves the creative use of prayer.

These experimenters will follow a prescribed regimen daily for a period of perhaps six months and then share the results that flowed from their endeavors.

Those who volunteer for such an unusual project should indicate a preference for the area of activity that interests them most, whether it be (1) overcoming a personal limitation, (2) helping someone else to transcend himself, (3) healing the suffering, (4) solving a social or community problem, (5) working for individual and / or world peace, (6) invoking aid for mankind, (7) cooperating in units-of-three on the achievement of spiritual projects, or (8) experimenting in groups.

By participating in this venture, volunteers will be experimenting with spiritual energies of the psyche, exploring inner space, contributing to the evidence available that every man by taking thought can re-shape his life for the better, and emphasizing how much more important it may be to change human beings instead of merely re-arranging the environment. There are many levels on which the experiment will have meaning.

Hospitals frequently advertise for blood donors. By contrast, we would like to ask thoughtful people to contribute the invisible and more subtle energy of the heart and the spirit. Participation in this experiment should not entail an excessive amount of time; a half hour twice a day may be sufficient.

Your response will determine the success of this projected experiment. It is our hope that we may be able to set up spiritual reverberations that will echo into future generations and produce more light for a world that greatly needs it.

Will you join us in this venture?

Fellowship in Prayer

MAN IS HERE FOR THE SAKE OF OTHERS

Albert Einstein

Strange is our situation here upon earth.
Each of us comes for a short visit, not knowing why,
yet sometimes seeming
to divine a purpose.
From the standpoint of daily life, however,
there is one thing we do know:
That Man is Here for the Sake of other Men...
Above all, for those upon whose smile and
well-being our own happiness depends, and also
for the countless unknown souls with whose
fate we are connected by a bond of sympathy.
Many times a day I realize how much my own
outer and inner life is built upon the labors
of my fellow men, both living and dead, and
how earnestly I must exert myself in order to
give in return as much as I have received
and am still receiving.

(Courtesy of Helen Margalith)

May the Angels be ever in your house....

— *Zelma Dennis*

THE SPIRIT OF EASTER

Velta Myrle Allen

I am the spirit of Easter.

I am the resurrection of rebirth into
everlasting life and endless eternity.

I am hope in every breast that lives and
becomes power when all else seems in vain.

I am the voice within that whispers, "I
am the Way, the Truth, the Life."

I am the spirit of Easter. When the
spring season blossoms in greening leaves
and flowering buds, and the earth is
fresh with new life after a dormant time,
so it is with the resurrection of the spirit.
A little rest and then the
harvest, without beginning and without end.

I am the presence in, around, and about
you through the valleys or on the hilltops,
for I am with you always.

I am the freshened earth after showers.

I am the rainbow after the cloudburst.

I am the calm after a storm at sea.

I am the peace felt in the speechless
moments of love, for I am the spirit of Easter,
the beginning and resurrection of all
beautiful hopes, dreams and intangible realities.

I am the substance of things hoped for.

I am forever and forever, for I am hope,
the spirit of Easter.

PASSOVER

*Jean Cassel and Joan Reisbord**

Freed from Pharaoh's heavy hand,
The Children of Israel crossed the land.
Unleavened bread they took in flight,
Led by Moses' gifted sight.

The Passover tale from days of old,
At Seder tables is retold.
Matzah, chrayn, the bone of lamb,
Symbols to help us understand.

How precious is freedom to work and pray!
How hard was the struggle to reach such a day.
Preserve it, deserve it, united agree:
Thank God for a life in the land of the free!

* At the time of writing, the poets were 13.

THE LURE OF THE INFINITE

Anthony Elenjimittam

The bewitching beauty, the enchanting rhapsody and the romantic thrill we experience from time to time looking at a landscape, the rising sun, the parting rays of the setting sun, the smiling children and the blossomed flowers, the torrential rains and the torrid heat of white sandy deserts, the sea beaches and the soaring peaks of Alps or Himalayas, the beggars and the sick, the birds and mammals—all without exception are the result of the Master Artist, the Universal Love, the Ancient Eternal One behind the ephemeral, evanescent things, events and happenings of the created universe.

All are marionettes in the hands of the Infinite, men, beasts, reptiles, fishes, and solar systems. Although God, Goodness, the Infinite is closer to us than our hands and feet, yet none can perceive Him, sense and realize Him until our minds and hearts are attuned to Him. The music and the radio news transmitted from London or New York are right here in front of me, behind me, everywhere around me. But I will never listen to them until I have a receiver set tuned to the wave lengths of London or New York or Moscow. Exactly the same is the position of God's voice and His mysteries which are captured by those only who in the silence of their hearts and the stillness of their souls sit longing, yearning and crying for the Lord.

In the field of realization of God, neither scholarship, nor cleverness nor erudition, wealth nor influence are of any avail. But a pure heart seriously yearning towards the vision of the Heavenly Father, the Divine Mother of the universe, will bring him to the threshold of God, and then into the very sanctuary of God, nay, to the very essence and substance of God-realization, because we are all progeny of God, the very breath of God, the very children of God born of His love and Substance.

Everything that falls within the ambit of sense perception is merely the shimmering and effervescent appearances of the Infinite. They are all becomings, all transient flux emanating from the bosom of the Infinite Being, which is "smaller than the smallest, and yet greater than the greatest," as the Upanishads state. The thrilling and romantic rapture which we sense at landscapes, horizons, children, flowers, stars and birds, nay, everything underneath, above, and around the earth and the skies, is all due to the conscious linking up of the individualized soul in human body with the Universal Self that is at the back and bottom of every phenomeon, because God is the Neumenon supporting all phenomena, the Substance behind all shadow, the One behind the multiplicity of men and things, the Universal Self underlying all ephemeral selves of men, beasts, angels, and other living beings.

Only saints, mystics and sages sensed the ravishing beauty of the Infinite. Did not Mira Bai of Merwar give up her palace and pleasures and go around the hills and dales of Hindustan singing like a nightingale the lyrics of divine love? Did not Buddha, the prince of Kapilavastu give up Yoshodhara, his consort, Rahula his son and his kingdom and become a beggar when the drum of Eternity was sounded in his ears, in search of Nirvanic Bliss, lured by the spell of the Infinite?

This joy unalloyed, this imperturbable peace which surpasseth all understanding is embedded in us, within the sanctuary of our own hearts, and yet we miss this treasure by looking for it outside of ourselves. As Sri Ramakrishna said, the musk deer runs hither and thither lured by the smell of the musk, not knowing that within its own navel is that musk. So all joy, peace and blessedness exist only in our purified consciousness, in enlightenment which enables us to identify ourselves with pure Consciousness, *Chaitanya*, and say with Jesus: "I and my Father are one," or with the Upanishadic bards sing: "Thou art That."

Ineffable is the lure of the Infinite, the nectar, the *elan vital*, the soothing balm for mortals treading this earth's crust. God is not up in the heavens, nor below the earth, He reigns supreme right in your heart which is His throne, His tabernacle, His living temple. Please Heaven to make us all worthy of His musical lyre, lured and ravished by Beauty and Love that is the Infinite!

WISE MAN

William Walter DeBolt

You fled from what you were
like a thief, thinking it wise
to forsake a fool.

THE LONELY STREETS

Laurence E. Estes

I saw the streets, the long and lonely
Without swish of skirt or stir of step,
And in turn I thought as I was going by
How lonely are the streets of God
For men to come and share
His beauty and His loveliness. . .
For not many enter this good land
Nor see the rubied golden light
Where sparkling waters leap.
How anxiously God must wait
For voices in the dusk—
And beyond kingdoms of the world
The angels lift their eyes
And wonder why God walks alone
Without companions by his side.
How lonely are the streets of God
The zephyrs wail a low refrain;
Where are the men who should have come
Those many years ago?

TIME

Berneice A. McCombs

Eternity is a very long time! Each of us measures time in different ways. To one a situation will seem just a second long; while to another the same period of time will represent ages. When we are young, time creeps. As we advance in years, time walks a little faster each day. Time really runs fast when our hair becomes white. God gave time to His creatures just a moment at a time. He wanted us to fill each second full of goodness and grace, goodness and grace towards God and our fellow men.

Time is like a wide river ever flowing towards the sea. You watch the river with its bubbles, leaves, and twigs being carried with the current. It is fun to wonder how far their journey will take them. Some will be caught at the shore and go no farther. Others will travel until out of sight and beyond our reach. Perhaps God gave us time to measure our flow to His Kingdom. While some of us are lost by the shore and others flow out of sight towards His light. According to God, each of us has a purpose, but so few seek to find this meaning to their lives. This can be accomplished through prayer and meditation; if we so desire. The river is always moving as time is always passing.

Each one of us measures time with a different tape-measure. Two people in love have no sense of time when they are together. The father of either one of them measures the time as a very long good-night parting. Have you ever noticed that love dissolves time? Your love for God, love for another, love for a pet—there is no sense of time during the moment you are sharing your love. In the Book of John, John says that God is love! God wants man to choose His love, therefore breaking this time barrier. God's love dissolves time.

God is the beginning and the end. Time stays, but we leave it behind as we depart from this world. It would seem we might be a little cautious of our actions in this life. Living more by God's rules, kinder to others, and letting our actions express God's goodness and grace in order to obtain His light. It is frightening how little we fail to realize that life was meant to reach this purpose of everlasting life with God. You still have a small part of God built within your soul and body. He wants you for His lasting kingdom. Remember, eternity is a very long time!

FOR ALL THE SWEET CONTINUITIES WE LOVE.

Carla Patsuris

In herculean ways
Warring negatives wound
Until gradually
(Brave in the morning or cringing alone)
We bleed empty

Yet, now, I can hardly bear to know
We are growing old,
And that the old must someday
Leave behind all things begun;
Things tended tenderly....

To adorn our names well
May we have gardened some good seeds
(Whispers of hope when anguish was a stone,
A song or two, or more) to root
And grow abundant....

VICTORY THROUGH SURRENDER

Harry Halsey Starrett

When, through spiritual awakening, man can say, with The Master, "Father, not my will but Thine be done," that is the great surrender; that is the re-birth; that is the resurrection from the dead and the ascension into the fullness of life.

Through this great surrender, man gains victory over self and over death and "death is the last enemy to be destroyed."

THERE IS A DOOR

Mildred Long

There is a door—a secret door—somewhere in your mind which opens into a garden. Perhaps that door is opened to you unexpectedly by a sunset, a symphony, a memory. And you accept the invitation to enter and explore.

How quiet it is and restful, away from the world's confusion and noise. Trees bring cooling shade. Flowers turn their beautiful colorful faces toward you. Quiet fountains soothe and cool your spirit, your tired mind, your weary body. Birds chirp and sing, awakening some forgotten joys and aspirations. Quotations from Scripture and from the Masters come to you unsolicited:

Acquaint now thyself with Him and be at peace.

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?

Rest in the Lord; wait patiently for Him.

He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

Be still and know that I am God.

And then you become aware that you are actually in God's presence. He is there. He is the author of this peace, this glow, this quiet serenity that pervades the garden. It is He who gives you this feeling of strength, renewal, anticipation. He widens your vision, deepens your convictions, fires your imagination with dreams of successes and beauties that await your acceptance.

You lift your eyes to the horizon of your garden and you see no wall, no partition. You see into the distance. And as you look, you are aware of an ever-receding horizon, like one who sails the ocean westward. You extend your mind, forgetting your body. You involuntarily unite your whole being with this consciousness beyond all horizons, and you recognize it as as extension of the God within. Then, you become aware that you are communing with Infinity.

LOVE DESCENDING

Antoinette Daria

Come, Holy Spirit!
My heart is an open door.
Show me Divine ways.

PRAYER

It is the solioquy
of a beholding
and
Jubilant soul!

.....Emerson.....

FULL CIRCLE

Emily Sargent Councilman

Slender willow leaves,
now that you've weathered
into tougher hues of olive shade
under summer's scalding sun
and wind-swept rain,
I recall the tender frailty
of your April green.

October
will brush you lightly
with muted rust and yellow...
and let you linger, tenuous,
brief lighter-than-air moments
before your luminous sky-floating turn
to waiting earth.

(Arizona Quarterly, Copyright 1966,
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WINTER BLESSING

Winifred Hamrick Farrar

I walked across a frosty field
Where silver stubble lay
Exposed to elements unkind
On that relentless day.
I walked until I came to trees
Completely nude and gray
And heard among the branches
A bird who helped me pray.

today is sunday

sun streams through
leaded windows

creating bars
which separate us

inside or out
a window is glass

separation is by choice
do you care to knock?

—*Marion H. Freeman*

THE IDEA OF SALVATION ACCORDING TO ISLAM

His Excellency Si Hamza Boubakeur,
Rector of the Musulman Institute of the Mosque of Paris

(This is the third of a five-part series on salvation according to various religious doctrines as presented in conference at the Ramakrishna Vedanta Center, Gretz, France.)

Translation from the French by Narcissa G. Chamberlain

In Islam, the idea of the salvation of man is that of the salvation of the soul of man. It presents itself under a double aspect: salvation on earth and the salvation of the hereafter. But according to Islam, man is not called to act in the future life. At his death, the total extinction of his acts is produced. Here below, man acts; but in the hereafter he submits—and can do nothing more.

In consequence, for the Musulman*, the two aspects of the problem are related. His earthly actions have a determining value and importance. In religions which allow that man is free of his destiny and responsible for his acts, his salvation in the hereafter is the logical fruit of his works on earth. To the wicked, eternal damnation; to men of good will, absolute and perpetual beatitude.

This conception of salvation, which is reminiscent of that of Christianity, Islam admits but with much reserve. For Islam, salvation is not necessarily the just recompense of pious works accomplished here below because the salvation of man arises from a mystery, the mystery of God. Why? Because Islam signifies, etymologically, "to submit oneself to God," to deliver oneself, give oneself to God and to bow before his prescriptions, to

* Note: Musulman, i.e., Moslem or Mohammedan. The translator has retained the form common to French and English.

perform in such a manner that the will of the individual may be the reflection of Divine Will.

Spiritual life in Islam is a lived experience of the attributes of God. Goodness, justice, charity, are intellectual words: the *true religious* is one who lives each of these attributes to the measure of his possibilities. Thus, in Islam—signifying to make the gift of oneself to God—this gift is, in itself, a flight toward salvation. One does not give oneself to God without reflecting, without interior aspiration. This aspiration is reaching out toward salvation.

Faith in God, for us, is the belief in one-only God, of an absolute uniqueness. A transcendant God. No confusion is possible between the Creator and the created; there is no fusion; there is no union. The created depends supremely on the Creator. Faith in God carries in itself chances of salvation, but faith of itself is not sufficient.

In fact, the gift of self to God, to the extent that it is sincere, integral, definitive, reduces individual liberty to insignificance. When one gives oneself, one is no longer free; this is the case for the Musulman in relation to God: The relative liberty of man becomes entirely subordinated to the absolute liberty. In consequence, either the gift exists and freedom is reduced to a small thing, or the gift is not sincere and does not exist, and one is outside of Islam.

But the subordination of the individual will to the will of God in no way implies a total abdication of individual freedom —there remains a margin for his freedom.

Those who do not know Islam, and those who have particular reasons for quarreling with it, have not understood this

Islamic conception of freedom relative to man, by reason of the gift of self to God and the subordination of the individual will to the absolute will of God. Thus, in Europe, this conception has sometimes been interpreted in a slightly unfavorable and slanted manner. They say that Musulmen are born lazy, that Islam is a religion which nullifies action. They have said it is a religion of passivity: It is enough to sit under a tree and wait for bread to fall from the sky.

This is nonsense. Freedom relative to the individual does not signify the abdication of individual freedom. The consequence of the gift of self to God is logical, but it is not a fatalism in which the individual is swallowed up, nor a *Mektoub* which would weigh down upon his acts and thoughts.

On the other hand, Islam proclaims the elementary truths. There is no constraint in religion. As soon as there is constraint, religion does not exist. In consequence, faith depends upon free choice, and the very fact that the individual brings himself to God indicates that there is here a margin of liberty for him.

But what does the salvation of man signify, and what, basically, is its nature?

Christians must save their souls. The idea of salvation supposes, then, a menace "a priori" for the human soul. This initial menace proceeds from the original sin, which the redemption of Christ removed, leaving man the free choice of following the way of paradise or of hell.

In Christianity one is free, totally free. This conception justifies, at the same time, freedom of choice and sanction, in good or in evil. Basically, the salvation of the soul is linked to the responsibility of the individual. Either he has acted badly

and he is responsible for his acts (in consequence, he knows what to expect), or he has acted according to the Gospel and, there also, he is conscious and responsible. His choice has merited for him good or evil. Paradise is as deserved as hell.

Islam and Judaism reject the theory of original sin and also of redemption. Islam situates man *not* faced with a choice —and there is the difference—but in very complex perspectives.

But what does salvation signify in Islam? Many think that salvation in Islam consists in entering into paradise where there are marvelous gardens with calm and limpid streams, where the faithful find houris of ineffable beauty, and where all that they desire is at their call, like peaceable debauchees who meet each other in joyous company.

Do you really believe that thinkers, religious, who have given, and give, their life to God still entertain sensual thoughts? This makes no sense. In all good faith, in the light of the Koran and theology, any Musulman can protest such an inexact assertion. It has been said—I have often heard it—that Musulmen grow at least one tuft of hair on the top of their heads that Mahomet may catch them and toss them in to paradise. It is, all the same, upsetting that good people, who have all possibilities of informing themselves, continue to repeat such an incredible story. It is false. And they confuse willingly, often in bad faith, allegory with idea, parable with precept.

Certainly, the Koran speaks of paradise, of houris and flowering gardens. This is undeniable, but it speaks of them in allegorical fashion. Each Koranic verse, in speaking allegorically of earthly things, is followed by the formula: "God uses parables in order to make us understand."

The prophet Mahomet is not God. He is a messenger in

the same sense as Jesus, Moses, Abraham, and all the great ones inspired by God. Mahomet addressed himself, not to a European crowd under the rain, amongst the trees, but to the tribes wandering in the deserts under a torrid heat. What can a man think in the desert in tremendous heat? He thinks of the oasis, of freshness, of the fruits of the earth. The Koran says: "He used the language which best suited our natures and our needs in order to lead us to God."

The commentators of the Koran and the theologians of Islam have never been mistaken about the paradise to which the soul of the believer should aspire on earth. The image the Koran gives is the very framework in which Adam and Eve dwelt before their fall. They were in paradise and it is a question of their fall. Then how dare one say that the paradise of the "Adamiques," descendants of Adam, is a sort of harem? This is false. Salvation according to Islam is certainly paradise, but not a sensual paradise. It is a paradise to be conceived in the setting wherein Adam and Eve lived before their fall. Its true nature is the vision of God. Salvation is basically a return to God, an approach for an eternal establishment within Him in the ravishment of His contemplation. According to *Sourate** 24, in verses 34 and 35, "God leads whom He will toward the light. He proposes parables to men. God is omniscient."

This direction is indicated by His prophets: Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Mahomet, who have received from Him His revelation. It is not then simple reasoning, but reasoning enlightened by revelation; it is not alone piety and charity which lead to God, but reason augmented and enlightened by the grace of God: revelation. This direction, this is religion.

The exterior side is constituted by worship and rites which, to the Musulman, appear as a necessary discipline. Faith in the

* Also, "Surah," chapter or book.

one God, prayer, charity, fasting, pilgrimage, these are preliminary points of departure of the intellectual order, necessary but not sufficient, for something more is needed to orient oneself toward the saving light of God. First must be excluded all idea of an intermediary. Between the soul and God nothing, and no one, can pretend to, nor should, interpose itself, not even the prophets, who are messengers and guides for men but not the minor deities of God on earth.

Those whose mission it is to occupy themselves with religion, the Imams with us, the priests and curés with you—like the prophets—should explain the laws of God transmitted by revelation and never pretend to withhold the slightest power of God in order to administer, as licensed managers and meddlers, His mercy, His pardon, or His indulgence. Our aspiration toward God does not depend on a science, nor on a perfect knowledge of texts: Our aspiration toward God depends on our feeble means and is measured according to the degree of our sincerity.

There is no clergy in Islam. There are no intermediaries arrogating to themselves the supernatural mission of dispensing divine clemency, no professors of morality who comport themselves on occasion like feverish fanatics, when not as sorcerers or crafty swindlers. Intermediaries may, as much by their serene quietude as by their clever exploitation or their frenzy, compromise the salvation of man. His salvation depends essentially on God.

If there are believers who, in their relations with God, reveal themselves as clever traders, devout traders, one must understand this to mean unenlightened believers who liken the religious life to a sort of banking organization with its investments and its speculators, and they have a speculator's conception of religion. They believe that sin is basically a debt that can be liquidated. Credit operations have for them such names

supplications, pious works, alms, altruism, or acts, which are like so many safe investments for the hereafter. From their point of view, since God is justice itself, these believers expect to realize in the hereafter the fair price of their good actions on earth.

This is not the conception of salvation according to Islam, which brings all back to the Divine Will. The traffic of good acts between heaven and earth is an essentially moral conception, destined to assure the survival and harmony of society, but on the spiritual plane it is an elementary and primitive conception. It appears to Islam as devoid of all spirituality, because the moral life is one thing and the spiritual life is another.

To be so mistaken about God and His messengers is a cloud, according to Islam, which covers the road leading to the true life, great and infinite. The believer is often led there in spite of himself by a mysterious attraction of the divine which works upon his soul and constrains it by a sort of motion through love, pain, confidence (and also distress), to discover God in discovering himself in Him. The religious life in Islam is not a rational medium of exchanges at long-term interest, but the total and immediate gift of self to God. And "God directs whom He will toward His light."

One does not give oneself to God for a reward, but only because He is God. Virtue does not guarantee salvation. The bandit need not despair of God. Nor the dissolute, nor the evildoer. Man, like the human saint, must not count too much on the satisfaction of God. From the point of view of Islam, there is some shame, for example, in supplicating God to obtain one's bread, to succeed in an enterprise, to triumph over an enemy or an obstacle, instead of asking Him to put us on the path of salvation. The first *Sourate* of the Koran which is the one we recite in prayer, a hymn of praise, says:

It is Thou (God) whom we adore,
It is Thou whom we implore.
Place us on the straight way,
The way that leads to Thee.

This text is exactly in accordance with the free will of God. It directs whomever He wishes toward Him. Our supplication, then, should be: Put us on the true way, that which leads toward God.

The religious life as Islam conceives it, then, is difficult. It is not made up of certitude. All who might wish it are not truly religious in the Islamic sense of the word. True spirituality is not within the reach of just anyone; it involves selection and vocation; it appears, upon analysis, to be a daily struggle, a combat without quarter, waged by the soul everywhere and at every moment—and shared between God and the world. Thus, the choice is determined with precision. It is the choice between God and the world while we are on earth and, consequently, we do not have to reject the world. But there is a world which monopolizes the soul and there is the world which leaves the soul its virtualities, its vocation, and its ties with God. It is precisely from anxiety to anxiety, from emotion to emotion that, helped by the grace of God, the religious discovers himself in intimacy with God. It is not because we do good; however, we *ought* to do good, but the outcome of the right choice is the ineffable joy of the discovery of self in God.

The believer is thus tossed about by his destiny and submitted to a double attraction, the human condition on one hand, the irresistible call of God on the other. Under penalty of floundering in a dangerous illusion, he must open up a road through that which is opposed to the true way in order to attain to—on earth, God helping—this transforming intimacy with his Creator and to bear witness before Him of his love and his submission in patient-

ly enduring his trials. This is the salvation that I have called the earthly salvation; it carries within it the first fruits of an intimacy with God and is already *salvation.*

Certainly, Islam affirms that the destiny of man is to be born, to die, and to be called back to life before God. But by this very conception of the "becoming" of the creation, by virtue of the verse affirming that God creates life from death and death from life, it authorizes the thought that life, death, and resurrection constitute basically one-only life submitted in successive stages toward an eternal resurrection. Here we approach the great spirituality of India though similarity does not mean identity.

An eternal resurrection in the divine All, as the celebrated mystic Al Hallaj said:

Here am I, Lord! Oh, my secret and my trust
I call Thee...No, it is Thou who callest me to Thee.
Oh, All of my All, for a resurrection without end.
And it is the Allness of this enigma that I obscure
in wishing to express it!

Divided between the world and the divine, the believer cannot be sure of his salvation which does not depend on human deeds but on the Divine Will. The option of the believer for God and the practice of philanthropy does not necessarily guarantee him paradise. The life of the believer, deprived of this certainty, thus becomes an action of perseverance and not a congenital passivity, not a sanctimonious satisfaction in his works; it becomes a permanent dynamism, not a passive state; it involves a mentality and a sensibility made of confidence and abnegation, a complex temperament and, above all, a surpassing effort.

The religious must feel himself the support of a continuous

action in a world in movement toward a perpetual becoming called the "Masir." The world is continuous, in ceaseless expansion, impenetrable mystery, "Gashiya," which arises from God alone. His life offered in thought and in acts to God is in itself, for the believer, an alternating series of emotions and anxieties mixed with love.

The religious life is difficult for the Musulman because the love which carries it and affirms it is, like all love, an alternate series of joy, suffering, confidence, hope and despair, disappointment and consolation. But this love differs completely from ordinary passions by its object, its evolution, its intensity. Its object is not limited to a beloved being—changing, ephemeral. It searches for the Being of beings, the Essence of essences, the Infinite, the Living, the Eternal, the Immutable. The love suitable to be offered to Him can be none but absolute Love.

This love, with its train of feverish transports, of fugitive joys, of atrocious backslidings, of illusory respites, of brief lulls, appears like a prelude to grace which at last tears the faithful from lassitude and revives his energy, leading him to the experience of a great life and a prodigious adventure whose stages bear seductive names for the profane but which are, for the true believer, remarkable memories of his perilous voyage, memories of his interior struggles, memories of the gradual falling off of the initial nature of the "I" and its directing role in a way of ascension and contemplation.

To the extent that his experience as a believer proves itself to be in "a fair way," his ego and his intellect end by fading away before the invasion of the divine presence, thanks to which operates a total and immediate interior realization of the universe in its apparent plurality, condensed in its essence, grasped in its fundamental unity and its basic spontaneity and integrated

in a complete fusion of the distinction of appearances—therefore foreign to the reason which is apt rather to distinguish, to define, and to find the connections in the things that it analyzes.

Faith imprints new colors on the knowledge of the believer. His knowledge is no longer exterior and discursive, but complete, intimate, lived according to a new and true scale which leads all things to their true dimensions and their just value. And this knowledge refers in everything to the power, the omniscience, the permanence of a living and free God, not to the ephemeral world with its illusions, its luster, its price, and, above all, its fragile and changing modes of life, civilizations of yesterday and today, perishable, without clearly formulated ends and of a patent instability.

The world thus reveals itself to the Musulman as a danger and a contradiction. He must, in order to liberate himself from its contingencies, revise his conceptions, give other colors to his horizons. One is not a believer if one cannot break the chains of the world to safeguard his unity. But such a liberation is not real and fruitful unless one aspires to taste of the supreme wisdom, not of the apparent wisdom infused in errors, incoherence, and contradictions.

One must make the same effort as that displayed by the shipwrecked man in the midst of the tossing waves who longs, despite his despair, to reach the distant beacon whose rays appear to him from time to time across the dangers of the sea and the terrors of the night.

In order to approach God, to attain one's salvation, this spiritual ascension admits, however, of a risk. God is free. Certainly, He judges us less for our results than for our efforts; but He is free. He is free to refuse Himself to us, to refuse us His

grace. And therein lies the drama! There are people who pass their entire life in a setting of spirituality, of holiness; but God does not give Himself to them. God is free. God is free and He directs His light upon whom He chooses. For the Musulman, salvation depends uniquely on God. There is no obligation of God in relation to us, nor rights of men over God. Men should follow His prescriptions, they should choose Him in practicing the good, but let one not imagine that salvation depends upon this. What, then, to do in order to deserve salvation? To this fundamental question, the attitude of the Musulman can be summed up as a little like the Christian maxim: "Do that which thou ought, come what may." And there is our "Mektoub."

CHILD OF MY LOVE

Grace Bush

Child of my love, I shall be near to thee
By night or day, wherever thou shalt go,
Not in some far-off heaven—dim—unseen,
But closer than thy breath, near as thy hand,
I walk the crowded city ways with thee
Guarding thee safely from each danger there,
Through each day's passing hours, stay by thy side
And when night shadows fall, child of my love,
Bend over thee to hear thy humble prayer,
And send a blessing on the twilight air,
Faint not, nor fear—I will lift up thy head!
No evil shall disturb thee or come nigh!
Though of my presence thou art unaware
Child of my love—I will be always there!

FAITH IS THE ANSWER

Estelle Davis Broadrick

The basic ingredient for a sane life is faith. Faith gives serenity and poise, courage and hope. Faith is the firm foundation beneath our feet, when life seems made up of quicksand and bogs—swampland. When we are weakened by doubt, fear, grief, and self-pity, we are living in spiritual and mental darkness. Faith is the light. Faith is the answer.

Unless we make an effort to control the negative emotions, unless we replace the negative thoughts with positive thinking, we shall become lost and confused. Faith is the answer. Faith is the absence of doubt. Faith is love, and "love casteth out fear."

If we live long enough with inner storms and strife we pay in the coins of illness and disorders of the body, as well as the mind. Faith gives us the peace that passeth all understanding. Faith is increased by prayer—and prayer and faith give purpose and meaning to life.

If we do not seek faith, and if we do not *live* faith, we shall be lacking in harmony, and courage. If we are not steadfast and constant in prayer, then faith will not grow but be a stunted plant—and we are doomed to the quagmire.

With faith we are armed for whatever shall come to pass. There is no limit to the distance we can travel, there is no mountain we cannot climb, with faith; there is no river too deep to cross, with faith.

He keeps us in perfect peace if our hearts and our minds are fixed on Him. If you do not have perfect faith in your heart then you are not enjoying perfect peace. If you do not live by faith, with

faith, and in faith, then you are robbing your *self* of peace and of the quiet-flowing happiness that endures—and you are robbing Him of the honor and the homage you should be paying Him.

However long the road, however weary we may become, we can rise up with renewed strength, simply by giving our hearts and our minds over to the Lord, and in waiting upon the Lord.

You do not have to study long tiresome books, or take special courses, or attend a university to learn wisdom and faith. You are instructed to read, to study the Scriptures, to pray for understanding. You may mount up as with the wings of eagles, if you are seeking first the Kingdom of God.

Faith is the answer to any problem that may come your way. You shall learn the truth—and the truth shall make you wonderfully free of doubt, of fear, and of the negative thoughts that would make you a miserable prisoner.

The search for wisdom is neither long nor difficult: Take God with you. Take wisdom with you. Life is an adventure. The time for the adventure to begin is *now;* the place is *here.* Read and pray and meditate. Seek the Kingdom of God. Seek the quiet temple of faith and perfect love. All you need shall be added unto you....

Open the door. Allow God to enter, to dwell within your heart. He is Life.

Let Him live in you, that you may dwell in Him. He will guide and strengthen. He will renew and refresh. He will uplift you and uphold you. He is aware of your every need and will fulfill that need. All that is good and right and lovely, all that is holy,

shall be yours.

God will dwell within, if you do not bind Him with the winding sheets of your doubts and your self-pity, your lamentations, your fears and your petty cares. Let go your doubts. Let the power and the glory loose in your soul, shedding a radiance on your life—your pathway. You cannot be defeated, you cannot fail if God is your guide. You will go on and on to great—and greater—heights.

HAND OUT / SEND OUT THE FELLOWSHIP BROCHURE!

You will notice that one of the Fellowship's brochures, telling its purpose and its history in brief, has been enclosed in your copy of this issue.

Will you please hand out the brochure to a friend who might like to become a member—or mail it to him? This would help the Fellowship a lot.

NOTICES and COMMENTS

NO EXPIRATION NOTICES SENT WITH THIS ISSUE. Because of our desire to include the Fellowship's historical brochure in this issue of the publication, we cannot afford to include notices to members whose subscriptions have expired. If yours has, you will help us a great deal if you will forward your check to the Fellowship anyway. Remember: one year's subscription costs three dollars, and anything over that amount contributes to the work of the Fellowship.

NEW ADVISOR. A recent, but nonetheless keen, enthusiasm for serving the Fellowship has led Mrs. Helen Margalith, Librarian of Eleanor Roosevelt Junior High School, New York City, to accept an invitation to become an advisor. Mrs. Margalith will share two major interests with us: books (as an official book reviewer for the New York City Board of Education, she will contribute reviews periodically) and the relationship of psychoanalysis to religion (a former student of the late Drs. Smiley Blanton and Henry Enoch Kagan, whose own work in this area was intensive), and she is a member or officer of many organizations related to the two, including the Library of the American Foundation of Religion and Psychiatry, the Rita H. Hopf Institute of Adult Jewish Studies, the National Association of Church and Synagogue Libraries, and the Association of Applied Psychoanalysis, among others.

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Minds are like parachutes. They function only when they are open.

—Thomas Dewar

"For a world united in prayer"

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